

corruption in the military and civil services, which hastened the downfall. Prince Edward lay slowly dying, unable to administer affairs. Next to him, his brother John of Gaunt was far the greatest subject in the land. By a fortunate accumulation of titles and estates, he stood in rank and wealth far above the other nobles. His superiority over them all was recognised by the title of Duke, then borne by no other Englishman save the Prince of Wales. But the personal influence of John of Gaunt over the King was the chief reason of his complete supremacy in England, a supremacy which as long as Edward lived was only broken during the session of the Good Parliament. The King, as a patriotic statesman complained, was governed * by the counsel of one man only.¹ He was dotingly submissive to his favourite son, and even consented to be on terms of intimacy with such dependents of the House of Lancaster as Lord Latimer and Sir Eichard Stury.² A more disreputable influence was exercised over the once glorious dictator of Europe, who now in dishonourable old age practised the vice which puts princes most easily into the hands of intriguing politicians. Alice Perrers, the King's mistress, was in close league with John of Gaunt.

As long as Edward lived, the only danger against which the Duke had to guard came at the season of year which brought together to Westminster the representatives of a people easily incensed by bad government, and those nobles who were his natural rivals or personal enemies. The Parliament of 1373, however, passed off very successfully for those in power; partly because they succeeded in putting an entirely false colour on the military events of the year. While the remnants of the splendid army which the Duke had led across France were perishing of cold and hunger in the Auvergne, the Chancellor had the face to declare that, < by their good and noble government and deeds of arms, our generals had * done great damage and destruction to the enemy over there.³ His demand for money was generously answered by a grant of taxes for the next two years.⁴

Although grants ¹ *o. & B.*, p. 78.

^a Wals., i. 320; *Chron. Ang.*, 76, 87, 102-3; *Rot. Part.*, ii.

823, * *prives entour le roi* *

» *Det. Parl.*, ii. 818. ⁴ *Ibid.* ii. 817.